

The guiding aspects of the NCG and the challenges of formation in the services and in the academy from the perspective of graduating students

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ABSTRACT

The objective was to evaluate the perception of graduating dental students from a public higher education institution in the Northeast of Brazil about their training in view of the National Curriculum Guidelines (NCG). This is a descriptive study, with a quantitative approach through the application of a validated questionnaire to 42 final-year students invited in a collective academic activity. The participants were regularly enrolled in the last two semesters of the curricular program in place and were oriented as to the ethical principles, with the signature of an Informed Consent Form. In response to the questionnaire, the students evaluated their training under four dimensions and respective sub-dimensions: Profile of the Emerging Student (generalist, humanist, autonomous, critical/reflective, able to understand the inserted context), Orientation of healthcare (epidemiological approach, health promotion, diagnosis, treatment, multiprofessionality), Teaching-service integration (internship activities and experience in the Unified Health System) and Pedagogical Approach (active methodologies, evaluation, professor's role, faculty development, learning scenarios, integrated curriculum, curricular flexibility, teaching-research-extension articulation). The results indicated relative performances above 80% of the maximum expected in all dimensions evaluated. The dimensions Teaching-Service Integration and Pedagogical Approach obtained lower average ratings, which may indicate that, although education in Dentistry in this institution has advanced more satisfactorily in its reorientation of profile and healthcare, the pedagogical development as well as the integration with health services and the population still have gaps in the perception of graduating students, pointing to the need for improvement, considering the challenges of a new (post) pandemic context and the new National Curriculum Guidelines published in 2021.

Descriptors: Education, Dental. Health Human Resource Training. Unified Health System.

1 INTRODUCTION

Currently, in Brazil, the academic education in Dentistry should be guided by the development of skills that point to a humanistic,

critic, reflective and transformer of realities professional profile, according to the National Curricular Guidelines (NCG). To this end, teaching spaces need to be favorable settings for the preparation for the entry into healthcare work, in which the focus shifts from the disease to health, and from individual actions to health promotion¹. Thus, the purpose of the NCG is to orient professional education so that undergraduates can act in a critical, resolute, and propositional way². Therefore, by defining a professional profile for the undergraduates, the NCG contributes to the elaboration of pedagogical projects and their syllabus, guiding the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) towards a better insertion of professionals in the healthcare services³.

The NCG of the Dentistry undergraduate course proposes the formation of professionals with broad critical and reflective skills, endowed with humanistic competencies, who ensure generalist healthcare in line with ethical principles, and who enable appropriate decision-making in healthcare that meets the needs of the community in which they work⁴. The dentistry undergraduate must be able to work in a multiprofessional, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary context, in order to provide a skilled look at the singularities of human beings, developing healthcare actions based on health promotion, prevention, recovery and preservation interventions within the pillars of the Unified Health System (UHS), a professional practice scenario capable of bringing together and unifying the services on a national level⁴.

It is possible to notice the strengthening of the UHS, among other social aspects, through the provision of healthcare training in the regions of the country. Thus, there is the implementation of strategies and actions that highlight the relevance of teaching organizations and also their regional advancement, which contributes to the reduction

of inequalities in the conditions of availability of professionals and healthcare services⁵. In this context, it is necessary that professional training in healthcare contemplates the implementation of health promotion actions, considering the expanded concept of health. This training should also be approached by reality-problematizing methodologies and leading to decision-making at the local level, based on scientific evidence. One way to address this challenge is through research, also involving undergraduates, directing and signaling a constant updating of pedagogical practices and the effectiveness of academic formation⁶.

In times of current challenges imposed by the pandemic of COVID-19, learning settings must be adapted to continue to nurture knowledge, promoting innovation and delivering quality healthcare care to the population⁷. Remote activity options should be inserted and enhanced in training institutions, allowing flexible syllabi to fit the pandemic reality. These activities are also associated with faculty training and development, so that students can build a learning experience that positively impacts the society⁸.

To evaluate education in Dentistry based on the NCG, an instrument was developed and validated; it proposes evaluation criteria distributed into four major dimensions: Profile of the Egress (evaluating the acquisition of professional competences by the future Dentistry professional); Healthcare Orientation (analyzing how students perceive the conduction of healthcare interventions); Teaching-Service Integration (pointing out how it is possible to view the articulation of healthcare services as well as the conducted internship activities); Pedagogical Approach (measuring how teaching and learning moments occur, the scenarios, faculty development, the role of professors, evaluative activities, and the arrangement of curricula from a

comprehensive perspective that ensures articulation among all the university's activities)⁹.

Thus, to broadly investigate, by means of validated criteria, how concluding students perceive the training in Dentistry experienced throughout the course, can indicate factors that direct strengths and challenges for curricular planning guided by the NCG of Dentistry courses in the country. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the perception of graduating students of the Dentistry course of a public Higher Education Institution in Northeastern Brazil about their formation, in terms of the National Curriculum

Guidelines.

2 METHODS

This is a cross-sectional, descriptive study, with a quantitative approach, through the application of structured questionnaires, based on an adaptation of the criteria matrix, validated for the evaluation of undergraduate dental courses, in accordance with the NCG¹⁰. The evaluation matrix is composed of four evaluative dimensions: Profile of the Egress; Healthcare Orientation; Teaching-Service Integration, and Pedagogical Approach (chart 1).

Chart 1. Evaluative dimensions and sub-dimensions of the study

PROFILE OF THE EGRESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalist • Humanist • Autonomous • Critic/Reflective • Able to understand the inserted context
HEALTHCARE ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epidemiological approach • Health promotion • Diagnosis • Treatment • Multiprofessionality
TEACHING-SERVICE INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internship Activities • Experience in the Unified Health System
PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active methodologies • Procedural Evaluation of the Student • Professor's Role • Faculty Development • Learning Scenarios • Integrated Curriculum • Curricular Flexibility • Teaching-Research-Extension Articulation

Source: Adapted from Pessoa and Noro, 2015⁹

The study included 42 undergraduate Dental students from a public Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Northeast of Brazil. Were included in the research students regularly enrolled in curricular components of the last two semesters of the course, with a total of 48 registered students. The lists of students were

obtained through the HEI's system. None of the students present at the time of collection refused to participate, and the losses were exclusively associated with the student's absence at the time of the research. Data collection was carried out in-person, between September 2018 and March 2019, during the collective moments of academic

activity of the class, when possible doubts about the research were answered. The data collection instrument consisted of a self-administered questionnaire containing objective questions about the participant's profile (gender, age, entrance to higher education, and participation in complementary academic activities) and validated questions⁹ for the evaluation of the experienced formation, based on the four dimensions (and their set of sub-dimensions) of the evaluation matrix (Chart 1). The instrument provided a brief description of each subdimension, supporting the assessment of each evaluation criterion by the participants, who rated each one from 0 to 10 based on their perception of the performance of each sub-dimension in their educational experience.

The data were tabulated using Microsoft Office Excel 2019 and SPSS-Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 20. Subsequently, it was conducted a descriptive analysis by calculating the relative and absolute frequencies of the variables. For the evaluation of the course in each proposed dimension, the relative performance was analyzed, as from the calculation of the weighted averages of each dimension, which considered the arithmetic averages assigned by the students in the subdimension and the respective corresponding weights. The adopted weights were: Profile of the Egress Dimension [Generalist and Humanist (Weight= 10), Autonomous and Able to Understand the Inserted Context (Weight= 9), Critical/Reflective (Weight= 8)], Healthcare Orientation Dimension [Epidemiological Approach (Weight= 9), Health Promotion (Weight= 10), Diagnosis, Treatment and Multiprofessionality (Weight= 8)], Teaching-Service Integration Dimension [Internship Activities (Weight= 10) and Experience in the UHS (Weight= 9)] and Pedagogical Approach Dimension (all subdimensions have a weight

equal to 10). The score obtained in the students' evaluation was then compared to the maximum expected score, obtaining the relative performance.¹⁰

Regarding the ethical principles in research with human beings, the present project followed all the guidelines of Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council, and was approved by the report number 2,082,988 and Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Appreciation (CPEA) number 45883815.3.0000.5188 of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Health Sciences Center of the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB).

3 RESULTS

Of the 48 final-year students, 42 participated in the study, representing a coverage rate of 87.5%. Regarding the characterization of the final year dental students of the HEI (Table 1), it was observed that the sample is predominantly female (71.4%), with the highest prevalence of up to 23 years of age (42.9%). Most respondents entered higher education through the NHSE/USS (61.9%) and participated in more than one complementary academic activity during graduation, characterizing a hybrid participation (83.3%).

Concerning the participants' assessment of the course using the proposed matrix, it was observed that all study dimensions presented scores above 8.0, resulting in relative performances that reached 93.4%, 97.6%, 90.5% and 81%, respectively, in the Profile of the Egress, Healthcare Orientation, Teaching-Service Integration and Pedagogical Approach dimensions (table 2). Among the dimensions, the Healthcare Orientation and the Profile of the Egress presented better performance when compared to the Teaching-Service Integration and Pedagogical Approach dimensions.

Table 1. Gender, age range, admission means and participation in complementary academic activities of concluding students of the Dentistry course

Characterization Variants	n	%
<i>Sex</i>		
Female	30	71.4
Male	12	28.6
<i>Age range</i>		
≤ 23 years old	18	42.8
24-26 years old	17	40.5
27-29 years old	5	11.9
≥ 30 years old	2	4.8
<i>Admission means</i>		
SSP	3	7.2
NHSE/USS	26	61.9
SPVT	5	11.9
Course Re option	8	19
<i>Participation in complementary academic activities</i>		
Scientific initiative projects	1	2.4
Extension projects	4	9.5
Hybrid participation	35	83.3
No involvement in any program	2	4.8

Subtitle: SSP - Serial Selective Process; NHSE/USS - National High School Exam/Unified Selection System; SPVT - Selective Process for Voluntary Transference

4 DISCUSSION

The feminization of the healthcare area in the country is a trend revealed in the last census of Brazilian higher education, which summarizes that, in the large area of healthcare and well-being, the number of undergraduates is predominantly female¹¹. The predominance of females among the graduates in this study confirms this process within the area of Dentistry and is similar to previous research. In them, it is discussed that this reality is

consistent with the development of a critical analysis regarding the evolution of the presence of women in higher education positions, and it evidences that the work environments in the healthcare area are more open to them.^{12,13}

In higher education in Brazil, according to the last Census of Higher Education, released in 2019, more than half of the incoming enrollment samples in HEIs was students between the ages of 19-24¹¹.

Table 2. Performance from the evaluation of the final-year Dentistry students

Dimension	Subdimension (Average)	Maximum expected score*	Score achieved in the evaluation	RP**
<i>Profile of the Egress</i>	Generalist (8,8)	9.2	8.6	93.4%
	Humanist (8,8)			
	Autonomous (8,1)			
	Critic/reflective (8,3)			
<i>Healthcare Orientation</i>	Able to Understand the Inserted Context (8,8)	8.6	8.4	97.7%
	Epidemiological Approach (8,1)			
	Health Promotion (8,8)			
	Diagnosis (8,5)			
<i>Teaching-service Integration</i>	Treatment (8,8)	9.5	8.6	90.5%
	Multiprofessionality (7,9)			
	Internship Activities (8,6)			
	Experience in the UHS (8,6)			
<i>Pedagogical Approach</i>	Active Methodologies (7,7)	10	8.1	81.0%
	Procedural Evaluation (7,8)			
	Professor's Role (8,3)			
	Faculty Development (8,2)			
	Faculty Development			
	Integrated Curriculum (8,3)			
	Curricular Flexibility (7,3)			
	Teaching-Research-Extension Articulation (8,6)			

*Maximum expected score, based on Pessoa (2015).

**Relative Performance

A similar situation was found in the present study, since, considering that most of the students were up to 26 years old and that the Dentistry course at the HEI in the study is completed in five years (10 semesters), it is assumed that their average age at admission was within the age range indicated by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (NISR).

Regarding the access to Higher Education, the NHSE/USS proved to be the most frequent admission way in the study, bringing to debate the context involved in the access to higher education in the country. Thus, NHSE/USS, over the years, has shown itself to be an effective measure for the democratization of access to

HEIs, reducing old barriers related to traditional university selection processes and decentralizing this selection system^{14,15}.

Most students claimed to have participated in complementary activities during their academic training. After entering the HEIs, students live such formative experiences according to their interests and aptitudes, in order to play a leading role along their academic path, relying on the faculty member as a facilitating agent. In this sense, the articulation of teaching, extension, and research activities enables a more complete academic formation⁴. These activities, therefore, have a key part in the teaching-learning process, strengthening social and professional skills¹⁶.

Farias-Santos and Noro (2017)¹⁷ compared the performance of health area students, including dentistry undergraduates, in the 2010 National Student Performance Exam (NSPE). The authors concluded that those who participated in the Education through Work for Health Program (which aims to reorient healthcare education and has a complementary character within the curricular structures) achieved higher performance when compared to those who did not have the same opportunity. This fact demonstrates the contribution of this type of complementary activities in academic formation and the importance of extracurricular practices for professional development.

The analysis of the dimensions of this study is based on the NCG for the Dentistry course implemented in 2002, which establish the importance of training dentists with a generalist, humanistic, critic/reflective profile and with competencies that help in understanding the social reality in an autonomous way, aiming at working in the UHS³. In this context, it is important to consider that, even though the curricular project of the Dentistry course dates from the year 2002, it is observed, in the present study, from the year 2019, a good performance of the Profile of the Egress Dimension, according to the perception of final-year students. As a result, there is a path toward the accomplishment of an education in accordance with a profile that is closer to the current professional needs and demands, which is the result of multiple factors and the unfolding of formative actions and experiences throughout the academic experience.

Represented as one of the parts of the evaluation of health training, divided into five subdimensions (Epidemiological Approach, Health Promotion, Diagnosis, Treatment and Multiprofessionality) that address the need for programs to grasp the epidemiological reality, the social factors of the health-disease process

and also the possibilities of interprofessional interventions, the Care Orientation is not explored directly by the NCG, but is pointed out in the need for integral healthcare⁹. Increased awareness among students, associated with overcoming barriers to the establishment of interprofessional education, from the structuring of courses to the understanding of common, specific, and collaborative healthcare competencies, make interprofessionality necessary in this proposal for a more holistic healthcare performance¹⁸.

The Healthcare Orientation Dimension and the Profile of the Egress Dimension performed better, when compared to the other two dimensions. This result may be directly related to the fact that the Pedagogical Approach and Teaching-Service Integration dimensions address more challenging subdimensions in the reorientation process of the Dentistry teaching, which include institutional structural issues, integration with the network of healthcare services, comprehension of health and models of care, and the pedagogical preparation of the teaching staff for the reorientation of training proposed by the NCG^{18,19}. Concerning the Teaching-Service Integration, an efficient articulation between the health services and the HEIs is essential to guarantee an agreement that favors an adequate experience with ample experience and that considers every possibility of dental care¹⁹.

The evaluated course presents, in its pedagogical proposal, mandatory curricular internships in the UHS, since the first semesters, and during the entire professional training, according to the curricular matrices of the evaluated course, which may have significantly contributed to a good performance both in this evaluative criterion and in the most highly evaluated dimensions in the study. This finding expresses the relevance of education associated

with the work within the health services in the UHS. Operating as a learning field that promotes close contact with the singularities of healthcare services, besides bringing possibilities of practices outside the university environment, the dental internships in public health services can help students by providing the formation of future professionals who work as health promoters, with humanitarian, respectful, and caring work practices towards society²⁰.

As for the Pedagogical Approach dimension, the Procedural Evaluation, Curricular Flexibility and Active Methodologies subdimensions, despite reaching averages above 7.0, were the ones that reached the lowest averages among the studied subdimensions. In this way, it was possible to identify in the results of this dimension the need for improvement, regarding the didactic-pedagogical development of professors for greater integration and flexibility among the curricular components of the course. As part of this better development there is the promotion of learning through active methodologies with alternatives for the strengthening and coherence of student evaluations.

The acknowledgment of active methodologies by students is essential for them to enjoy the positive consequences of the implementation of a transforming teaching-learning process, guaranteed by the presence of these innovative pedagogical practices²¹. Hence, the development of the teaching and learning processes allows the mobilization of academic knowledge to ensure a true solving of the community's health issues.¹⁹.

It is considered that there was a positive perception of in-service training, highlighting the data collection prior to the pandemic period, but in the current global context of health emergency faced, this fact may suffer interference from the possibilities of work beyond the school walls.

New challenges regarding dental education are being faced in this context, since the pandemic of COVID-19 directly impacted the pedagogical strategies of training in Dentistry. Thus, virtual learning environments are gaining space as pedagogical strategies for teaching^{7,8}. This scenario brings to discussion the relationship between the professor's role, faculty development, and assessment of student learning in this new reality, as well as new and worrying challenges for teaching-service integration, especially regarding internships and experiences in the UHS.

The new tools for remote teaching bring facilities to face the current pandemic context, but issues related to the students' access to adequate equipment for the activities and the professors' preparation regarding the use of these technologies need to be considered⁸ and are closely linked to the Pedagogical Approach Dimension of the proposed evaluation matrix.

Among the obstacles pointed out by students for carrying out practical activities in curricular internships, is the fact that the work in Dentistry is still isolated and fomented in clinical practices with great technical support, in a way that there is still a recurrent devaluation of the dental surgeon who works in the national public service²². The clinical practice in Dentistry education, especially in the internships, still needs collaborations of the entire university environment, as well as support from the management levels to encourage these practical experiences that can guarantee students a learning experience in the reality of healthcare services²³.

The results of the evaluation of graduating students of the Dentistry course about their formation promote a reflection about how much it was possible to advance in the guiding issues of the formation. Such matters are the achievement of an undergraduate with a profile

and characteristics in accordance with the current market and population health needs, as well as the orientation of care under the paradigm of health promotion and care practices with epidemiological orientation of the reality, applied by multiprofessional teams operating in an interdisciplinary way.

Despite the fact that the present research was carried out only with the perspective of concluding students, not including reflections from teachers and other curricular factors involved in the teaching-learning process, and also because it was a study conducted in a single HEI with a number of students restricted to a scenario in the Brazilian Northeast, it is fair to say that the paths for an education committed to the aspects brought by the 2002 NCG have been forming a basis for the new NCG published in the year of 2021.

However, the results point to the challenge of the effectiveness of these theoretical-orienting factors in practice, reflected in a lower performance related to the evaluation of issues concerning the teaching-service integration that permeate the internship activities and experiences in the UHS. Other findings consist of aspects of pedagogical practice, which cover from challenges of curricular nature- such as integration and flexibility to the teaching practice itself- to the difficulty of applying innovative teaching and assessment methodologies, due to the lack of the necessary faculty development.

5 CONCLUSIONS

It was observed a satisfactory student outlook on the experienced dental education, highlighting limiting factors, possibly associated with issues of Teaching-Service Integration and Pedagogical Approach in the formative practice, added to the outstanding performances regarding the aspects that orient the ideal Egress Profile and the Healthcare model of the theory that directs

the fulfillment of the NCG in the analyzed course. The emerged considerations can be better forwarded with the realization of new studies and debates that contemplate the new challenges of the current pandemic times.

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RESUMO

As fortalezas orientadoras das DCN e os desafios da formação nos serviços e na academia sob o olhar de estudantes concluintes

Objetivou-se avaliar a percepção de estudantes concluintes do curso de Odontologia de uma instituição de ensino superior pública do Nordeste brasileiro sobre a sua formação, à luz das Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais. Trata-se de estudo descritivo, com abordagem quantitativa por aplicação de questionário validado a 42 discentes concluintes convidados presencialmente em atividade acadêmica coletiva. Os participantes estavam regularmente matriculados nos dois últimos períodos da matriz curricular vigente e orientados quanto aos preceitos éticos, com assinatura de Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido. Em resposta ao questionário, os estudantes avaliaram a sua formação sob quatro dimensões e respectivas subdimensões: Perfil do Egresso (generalista, humanista, autônomo, crítico/reflexivo, capaz de compreender o contexto inserido), Orientação do cuidado em saúde (enfoque epidemiológico, promoção de saúde, diagnóstico, tratamento, multiprofissionalidade), Integração Ensino-serviço (atividade de estágio e vivência no SUS) e Abordagem Pedagógica (metodologias ativas, avaliação, papel do professor, desenvolvimento docente, cenários de aprendizagem, currículo integrado, flexibilização curricular, articulação ensino-pesquisa-extensão). Os resultados

sinalizaram desempenhos relativos acima de 80% do máximo esperado em todas as dimensões avaliadas. As dimensões Integração Ensino-serviço e Abordagem Pedagógica obtiveram menores médias de avaliação, o que pode sinalizar que, embora a formação em Odontologia na instituição tenha avançado mais satisfatoriamente em sua reorientação de perfil e de cuidado em saúde, o desenvolvimento pedagógico assim como a integração com os serviços de saúde e com a população ainda encontram lacunas na percepção de estudantes concluintes, encaminhando a necessidade de avanço, considerando ainda desafios de um novo contexto (pós)pandêmico e as novas Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais publicadas em 2021.

Descritores: Educação em Odontologia. Capacitação de Recursos Humanos em Saúde. Sistema Único de Saúde.

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